

**FITCHBURG PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paula Caron, Chair
Mike DiPietro
Mike Hurley
Nancy Maynard
Paul Fontaine, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elizabeth Slattery
John DiPasquale

PLANNING OFFICE: David Streb
Mike O'Hara

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:03 p.m. in the Veteran's Room, First Floor, City Hall.

Communications

Mike O'Hara informed the Board of training opportunities provided by Mass Planners Training Collaborative.

Also he had heard from Atty. John Barrett that the parties in the Metro PCS Special Permit appeal have reached an agreement and a Stipulation of Dismissal has been signed.

David Streb said that he had just received an email regarding the approved federal economic stimulus package, which will be providing additional CDBG and Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) money for the city at a later date.

Mr. Fontaine asked if the Board can be updated regarding the status of pending litigation, such as the Pandiscio special permit on Wanoosnoc Rd and the Nursing Home on South Street.

Meeting Minutes

Motion made & seconded to approve minutes of the January 20th (CDBG) meeting.
Vote unanimous to approve.

Motion made & seconded to approve minutes of the January 22nd Planning Board meeting with minor corrections by Ms. Caron. Vote unanimous to approve.

ANR plans

The Board reviewed and endorsed the following "ANR" plan:

Hedon Realty Trust, Benson St.

Adjustment of property line. Revises a plan prepared for Construction Dynamics endorsed 7-18-06.

Minor Site Plan Review

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning Board CDBG recommendations

After a brief discussion, motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Hurley) to submit the staff's recommendations to the Mayor unchanged.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Site Plan Review - Parkhill Plaza 529-539 Electric Ave. - new 4,800 sq. ft. retail building

Voting members present: Caron, DiPietro, Fontaine, Hurley, Maynard (5)

Action: continued to March 17.

Steve Mullaney, P.E. presented plan. He introduced Paul DiGeronimo, owner of Parkhill LLC. He showed an aerial photo with property lines overlaid. He said that the plan was to remove roughly 2,300 sq. ft. of retail space along the edge of the existing building, to build a new building of 4,800 sq. ft., to better define and control access to the site from Electric Ave. & Franklin Rd., and to layout parking so that it's not a cut-thru. Proposing a landscaping strip and landscaped islands. 105 parking spaces will remain. Only 88 are required by zoning.

Ms. Caron asked if they brought any renderings of the proposed building or of the renovated building.

A: No.

Ms. Maynard asked how traffic was going to be controlled at the site, as traffic is a nightmare there.

Paul McNamara, Police Officer: Are you going to be retaining a sidewalk?

A: Yes, with granite curbing. They'll repair sidewalk where there is one. It's existing asphalt sidewalk.

Paul DiGeronimo clarified that they have no plans to replace the existing sidewalk, and that the granite would be on the roundings at the new driveways, and not granite curbing in the public way.

Mr. Fontaine pointed out that the sidewalk is at the same level as the street, separated by the white line.

Paul D. said it's a raised sidewalk. Mr. Fontaine said it is not. Planning Board would like granite curbing all along Electric Ave.

Pat Wyman, owner of Wyman Liquors, pointed out that jersey barriers are being proposed. He's concerned about the ability of trucks to get into his site (no truck with a turning radius >25 feet would be able to access) and that fire trucks won't be able to enter. Barriers will make access to Redemption Center difficult.

Ms. Caron: So why block off access to Wyman's?

Mullaney: Wyman has no street frontage—they have an access easement but nothing else. They had tried to make deal. Wyman was apparently unwilling to pay money for an alternate arrangement.

He referred to letter from Atty. Erb – Wyman's easement is for access only – not for parking.

Paul McNamara: This is becoming a high crash area. Was there a traffic study to identify pedestrian conflicts? The Police Dept. is concerned with pedestrian safety at the site.

Mullaney said that these improvements will increase pedestrian safety. They've aligned the driveway with the IC Credit Union driveway across the street.

Greg Morand of Aubuchon Hardware showed a plan that showed where the Aubuchon barriers are located.

Ms. Caron read comments from the Fire Department requiring Wymans to change their parking to allow apparatus access.

Paul DiGeronimo stated that they are respecting all private property rights. Wyman's issue is burdening Parkhill Plaza.

He said he is planning on a mid-summer construction. The facade of the new 4,800 sq. ft. building will be similar to his new building at J. F. Hwy. & Summer Street.

Ms. Caron stated that she has an issue with the appearance of jersey barriers. Steve Mullaney said that if they were to use a fence, it would have to be reinforced with a guardrail on both sides.

Malcolm Lillie, Jr. 544 Beech St. stated he's concerned about noise levels at the site. He was assured that only small retail tenants would be occupying the new building.

Apparently, when Wymans renovated their property, he encroached on his own parking, & when plastic barriers were erected, Wyman's trucks moved the barriers and spilled trash and affected the bank's queue.

Greg Morand said he's in favor of the project. He said his barriers don't block access to Wyman's Redemption Center. He expressed concern that the proposed traffic lane is offset 17 feet from the traffic lane on Aubuchon's property, and hoped the proposed building could be moved to align the lanes better.

Mr. Fontaine said that we shouldn't penalize Paul DiGeronimo for following the rules.
Ms. Maynard said that a traffic study should be done.

Discussion ensued among the Board about the attractiveness of jersey barriers versus a fence, and the desirability of a traffic study.

There should be an elevated sidewalk along Electric Avenue with a berm – not necessarily granite. Bituminous berm is OK.

Mr. Hurley – how about shrubs on the islands rather than jersey barriers, or a wrought iron fence?

Ms. Caron wanted to continue to March meeting. The Board would like to see additional detail on the barriers, and renderings of the proposed building.

Hearing continued to March 17, 2009.

OTHER BUSINESS

Request for reconsideration – “Balsam Heights” subdivision

Brian Devellis and Atty. Philip Lombardo were present. Attorney Lombardo stated that it was their impression that they had addressed the Board's concerns, and that all was going well until the vote. Under what circumstances would the Board vote to reconsider the matter?

Ms. Maynard said that she voted in the negative because of the drainage issues and that the road (Fisher Road) is of insufficient width.

Ms. Caron was concerned about the condition of the roadway and the access to the site.

Atty. Lombardo said they thought they met the concerns of the peer review engineer.

Ms. Caron was concerned about the rural character being affected – the houses being so close together. Mr. DiPasquale said that was his biggest concern as well – it is an urban development in a rural area.

Ms. Maynard said that she'd be willing to move to reconsider. Board voted 4-1 to reconsider their previous vote (Mr. DiPietro against).

Issue will be discussed at their March 17th meeting. New notice will be provided.

Meeting adjourned 8:40 p.m.

Next meeting: March 17, 2008
approved: 3-17-09